

# After a Cataclysmic Flood, University Chooses AppAssure to Protect Its Data

## Background

With over 80 degree programs, Valley City State University in North Dakota is noted for being a leader in online and distance education, as well as technology innovation – VCSU was one of the first campuses in the nation to have laptops for all 1,500 of its students, faculty, and staff. In addition, the university has started a massive VM initiative, getting rid of its physical servers to remain on the cutting edge of technology.



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Systems Administrator,  
Valley City State University**

After being forced to pack all its servers into a pickup truck heading for higher ground due to a 500-year flood in North Dakota, Valley City State University decided to implement a more effective disaster recovery solution.

“We were one clay dyke away from losing our entire data center,” recalls Erik Kringlie, one of VCSU’s Systems Administrators. “One of my biggest fears – the physical location loss of all our data – was about to come true.” VCSU closed campus, and Erik and his team were forced into disaster recovery mode: they packed everything up – servers, cables, and machines – threw them into a pickup and drove to a high location. Even after the flood waters started to recede, Erik’s team couldn’t bring the data center back to the first floor. For four months, they had to exist in a remote location while a new facility with its own generator power at a physically-higher location was being built.

After the flood, VCSU turned to AppAssure to become its main disaster recovery solution.

As Erik explains it: “What drove us to AppAssure is the replication feature. I’ve evaluated a lot of backup and disaster recovery products and most of them can’t give me the ability to backup and restore Exchange for both a disaster recovery mode AND at an individual message level, as well as to have VM in another location. But AppAssure does.”



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VCSU was clear that they needed an offsite remote data center where all of their centers were replicated. Says Erik, “We don’t want to wait for another disaster – once I have all the system protected and my storage just the way I want it, I’ll be digging into the replication side so we can get a second core up and running in a remote location.”

With 1TB worth of data and the backup at 400GB, Erik couldn’t be happier.

“During the flood, the whole campus had to shut down physically, but we put everything online with Blackboard and everyone was able to finish out the semester online. Then it was a summer of rebuilding. Now the big push is making sure the data is secure. We’re very pleased with AppAssure and I now have 10 servers protected with it – with a target around 20.”

Everything with AppAssure has been very easy so far for Erik and his 11 member IT team: installations, setting up agents, restoring, and testing have all gone so smoothly that Erik is a bit surprised! “I’m speechless how easy and simple it is. Our old system was fighting us.”

“We kept having issues and pulling out our hair. We’ve struggled with the email Exchange environment for years, but with AppAssure and MailRetriever, I just feel so much better. It’s all just so very easy to back up and restore.”

“My biggest fear has been data loss and the ability not to restore it. Server outages are inconvenient, but I don’t really fear them. What I don’t want to do is tell the president I’m sorry, but we’ve lost everyone’s email! So now we’re almost entirely in the Sphere and with AppAssure, the biggest thing is knowing that the data will be off site – a point and click away from bringing a server back online. Once we’re replicated, I’ll be sleeping so much better at night. I’m so glad we have this!”

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